

# Work/Life Newsletter

Work/Life News

May 2002

*Extra, Extra...*



## *Winners of the Commissioner's Outstanding Quality of Life Program Award*

The Commissioner's Outstanding Quality of Life Programs Honor Award recognizes employees who have demonstrated outstanding, innovative achievements in advocating, recommending or implementing programs or a special activity, which promote balancing a career and personal needs of employees and their families.

Commissioner Keys confirmed the 2000 Manager and Employee Award Recipients in March, and the winners were announced in an all-employee Reclamation-wide e-mail notification. Carol Erwin, Area Manager of the Phoenix Area Office, won the Manager's Award, and Michelle Klose of the Dakotas Area Office won the Employee Award.

Commissioner Keys will present the winners with their awards at the All Managers' Conference in May.



**Carol Lynn Erwin** (left) won for her commitment to helping employees meet responsibilities of both work and home life by fostering an environment that bolsters greater productivity and high morale.

In her citation from Commissioner Keys, Carol is recognized as a leader in family-oriented policies and programs who has established many innovative programs to promote the personal needs of her employees.

As Area Manager of the Phoenix Area Office, Carol has either adopted or implemented the following programs: Let's Talk sessions, Quiet Room, Peer-to-Peer Program, education fair, bus passes, and health initiatives such as flu shots, onsite massage, and stress management.

**Michelle Klose** (right) won for introducing a community fitness program to the Dakotas Area Office in Bismarck. This successful program encouraged people to exercise over the fall and winter months.



Michelle discovered the Health Trip 2001 program, which lasts 24 weeks and encourages people to exercise through the toughest weather period in the Dakotas, November through April.

Michelle sent an interest announcement to DKAO employees explaining the program. Her enthusiasm resulted in 40 people signing up; some spouses of Reclamation's staff also participated. Five teams formed, and Michelle coordinated with the team captains to update and encourage participants to keep going (especially during the really cold weather). Participants tracked the number of hours they exercised (1 hour of aerobic exercise equaled 1 mile).

At the conclusion of the Health Trip, Michelle planned a celebration for all the participants to reward them for their efforts and to encourage other staff members to participate in the program next fall. The total miles logged by DKAO participants for the

Health Trip was 3,457 miles. What a fantastic achievement!

Congratulations to both our winners!

***Did You Know?***

The request for nominations for the 2001 Commissioner's Honor Award for Work/Life Achievement is out now. We know there are many deserving nominees, so please nominate someone this year!

## ***New Sponsor for Work/Life Team***

Jim Weeks, Associate Director, Diversity and Human Resources, is the new sponsor of Reclamation's Work/Life Team. Many of the team's activities relate closely to Human Resources, and we look forward to working closely with him on upcoming issues.

The team would like to thank its previous sponsor, Margaret Sibley, Director, Office of Policy, for many years of enthusiastic support for Reclamation work/life activities.

## ***Upcoming Work Life Events***

Check the items below to see what's been scheduled for your area.

**Denver Office.** Watch for two brown bag sessions:

- L May 13—"The Lighter Side," using humor to fight stress presented by nationally known speaker Karen Ruth White.
- L May 18—"Get It Together," a question-and-answer session with a personal organizer. Come ask Joni Fisher how to make your life run smoother at work and at home.

**Lower Colorado Region.** Mid-May through mid-June—"Eldercare Concerns" workshops will be held at different places throughout the region. These 1 to 2 hour training sessions will be presented by EAP representative Dr. Richard Ward.

## ***5 Steps to Help Your Aging Parents Stay Sharp***

Help your aging parents stay mentally sharp by following these five suggestions:

- 1. *Send care packages that stimulate the mind.*** Each new thing we learn creates new connections among brain cells. Buy that thought-provoking new best seller or season tickets to the community theater. Pay for an adult education class.
- 2. *Encourage physical activity.*** Older adults who walk regularly or perform routine housecleaning are more likely to stay mentally sharp than those with more inactive lifestyles.
- 3. *Stay informed*** about your parents' blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels. Older adults who keep their blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol in check — and who don't smoke — reduce their risk of stroke.
- 4. *Don't take over.*** Research suggests if older adults believe they can deal with what life throws at them, they will more likely stay mentally sharp as they age.
- 5. *Encourage healthy eating.*** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and fiber may help older adults stay both physically and mentally strong.

**Source:** BlueCross/BlueShield Bulletin

## ***Recent Work/Life Activities Around Reclamation***

**Mid-Pacific Region.** In collaboration with human resources and the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department, the Mid-Pacific Region hosted a forum

on elder abuse on March 12, 2002. More than 30 participants attended the presentation from neighborhood associations including the Sacramento Job Corps Center, Crossroads, Sacramento Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, Citrus Heights United Methodist Church, Sacramento Women's Council, Mid-town Lions Club, and the Lemon Hill Career Center (Sacramento Works).

Highlights of the discussion focused on elder abuse profiles, California victimization statistics, and mandated reporting procedures.

In an on-going effort to promote the Department of the Interior's diversity and quality of work life concerns, the human resources office has been instrumental in sponsoring several forums that specifically address contemporary issues affecting the community and Regional employees.

More than 100 people attended previous sessions on hate crimes and the "myths" associated with affirmative action. For more information, please feel free to contact Tyrone Long, Equal Employment Specialist at (916) 978-5482.

## ***Community Eldercare Resources***

*The following information on eldercare appears on OPM's web site. This newsletter will include information on different eldercare resources each issue. This time, topics are adult day care, area agencies on aging, and assistive products.*

Many people associate the aging process with the need for nursing home care. In fact, most persons do not need nursing home care. Instead, many parents or older persons can remain independent, but frequently need assistance with various daily living tasks. Communities throughout the United States offer varied services for their aging populations. Check with the social services office of your parent's or older person's local government to determine which services are available in his or her area.

Utilizing these community resources can help your parent or older person live more comfortably and remain independently in his or her home. In addition,

a parent or older person who have chosen an alternative living arrangement, such as congregate housing, can use these services as an additional tool to make daily living simpler. The list below will familiarize you with some of the community resources that may be available in your parent or older person area and suggest the general availability of these services across the country.

Remember, you must contact the local government where your parent or older person resides to determine if these services are available in his or her area.

## ***Adult Day Care***

Adult day care centers offer a variety of health care and social services for people who need assistance with personal care such as grooming or toileting, but not around-the-clock care. Round trip transportation may be provided to the center where people may spend a few hours or all day.

***Availability*** — Adult day care center availability varies. The centers may be operated by hospitals, nursing homes, religious organizations or privately owned care centers. Contact your parent or older person's Area Agency on Aging for information.

## ***Area Agencies on Aging***

Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) provide access to a variety of services to older persons in communities throughout the United States. These services include: information and referral, homemaker/home health aides, transportation, congregate care and home-delivered meals, chores, and other supportive services.

***Availability*** — AAAs are located in every State. The types of services they offer will differ.

## ***Assistive Products***

Assistive products are services and devices that can be purchased or rented to help people function better at home. These may include devices for persons with

hearing and/or visual impairments and those who need help in walking or moving about.

**Availability** — Assistive products may be available from medical equipment rental stores or electronic product retail stores. Several States have assistive products and devices distribution programs operated by the State rehabilitation agency for the disabled.

This information is reprinted with permission from the AARP's publication *Tomorrow's Choices*.



### ***Adoption of Emily Joy “LiGuan” Erger***

by Patrick Erger, Great Plains Region

On December 5, 2001 my wife, Lynne, and I traveled to Hong Kong, China, to receive our new daughter, Emily. We had started the process of adopting a little girl back in January, 2000. We arrived in Hong Kong almost a year later, on December 7, and Emily arrived at our hotel on December 9. We stayed in China until December 20 to complete processing and obtain Emily's visa.

I have been asked about Reclamation's policy to obtain the necessary time off to travel to China and stay home the required time to adjust and bond with Emily. It was very simple and easy to take time off. I had scheduled my work and made the necessary arrangements with others in Montana Area Office and the Regional Office to cover critical projects. The Family Friendly Leave Act was wonderful; it allowed me to use my annual leave and sick leave to travel and have time off once home to spend with the family and Emily.

Emily has a wonderful smile, great personality, and has had **no** problem adjusting to her new surroundings and family. If anyone has any questions or would like to discuss adoptions, please feel free to e-mail me at [perger@gp.usbr.gov](mailto:perger@gp.usbr.gov), call at (406) 247-7313, or send me a note.

### ***Eldercare Resources***

All Work/Life Team representatives have the booklet, *Eldercare: Protecting Your Aging Parents' Assets & Preserving Your Own Inheritance*, available for check-out.

Last year the Denver Office held four brown bag sessions on eldercare concerns. Videotapes of these sessions are also available for check-out from your Work/Life Team rep.

The following two books are recommended sources of information on caring for aging relatives. They may be ordered from your local bookstore or from online sources:

- L** *How to Care for Aging Parents*, by Virginia Morris and Robert Butler, Workman Publishing Company, 544pp.
- L** *The Complete Eldercare Planner: Where to Start, Which Questions to Ask, and How to Find Help*, by Joy Loverde, Times Books, 272 pp.

### **Team Members**

Gayle Shanahan (OP), Team Leader 303-445-2794  
 Kathy House (TSC) 303-445-2582  
 Cynthia Fields (MSO) 303-445-3002  
 Dulcy Setchfield (DHRO) 303-445-2639  
 Mollie Buckey (WO) 202-513-0600  
 Linda Deavila (GP) 406-247-7760  
 Nancy DeCenso (LC) 602-216-3908  
 Richard Poole (MP) 916-978-5560  
 Jim Perez (PN) 208-378-5187  
 Mark Watkins (UC), Acting Team Leader,  
 505-325-1794 x139